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ABSTRACT

Byron was a best-selling poet and a celebrity with a notorious reputation. This article seeks to examine how his public image and private person were related, the part clothing played in the projection of his public image, and the degree of control he exerted over his body and his self-image. The article examines a number of sources relating to Lord Byron – his journals and letters, his poetry and public output, biographies, bills and accounts, paintings and illustrations, and the surviving clothing associated with the poet. From these a clothing narrative of the poet's early life, up until the time of his departure for Europe in 1816, can be constructed and examined in relation to the fashions of his era and the idiosyncrasies of the poet. Some of the surviving clothes are examined for their cut and construction and discussed in relation to others of the period. A companion article, dealing with his life abroad until the time of his death in 1824, will follow at a later date.

INTRODUCTION

There are many Byrons. Here is one:

'As every one forms a picture to himself of remarkable characters, I had depicted his Lordship in my mind as a tall, sombre Childe Harold personage, tinctured somewhat with aristocratic hauteur. You may therefore guess my surprise when the door opened, and I saw leaning upon the lock, a light animated figure, rather *petite* than otherwise, dressed in a nankeen hussar-braided jacket, trowsers of the same material, with a white waistcoat; his countenance pale, but the complexion clear and healthful, with the hair coming down in little curls on each side of his fine forehead.'

This reminiscence is from a friend of the novelist John Galt (1779-1839), writing from Edinburgh in 1830.[1] The year of his visit to Lord Byron was 1823, the month May, the place Genoa. Byron would not live to see another summer.

This experience was not uncommon. Lady Blessington (1789-1849), writing of her first meeting with Lord Byron at Genoa in April 1823, confesses: 'I have seen Lord Byron; and am disappointed! But so it ever is, when we have heard exaggerated accounts of a person; or when, worse still, we have formed a *beau ideal* of him.' She had expected 'an individual resembling Phillips' portrait of Byron, but paler and more thoughtful'.[2] Instead she found him witty, sarcastic and lively enough to have authored *Beppo* and *Don Juan.* She could not equate him with the author of *Childe Harold*, the long narrative poem which first brought him to public attention. Far removed from London, following a legal separation from his wife, his reputation had grown. He had become almost mythical. An impression had been created in the public's mind, both through his earlier verse and the influential images of him created by artists, notably Richard Westall (1765-1836) and Thomas Phillips (1770 - 1845), whose early portraits of him were widely distributed through printed copies (Figures 1 & 2). They had portrayed Byron in dark clothing, with open necked shirt collar, the poet seemingly abstracted, his focus elsewhere, with a draped cloak giving a classical reference. This style of representation of poets and authors owed much to the previous century, to the theatre of David Garrick and the tendency among painters like Sir Joshua Reynolds to give his sitters' clothing a timeless quality.[3] Contemporary illustrators of Byron's poetry frequently conflated a likeness of the poet with his leading male characters, reinforcing the connection between the poet and the iconography.[4] In this, Byron was often complicit. Nevertheless there remained an individual with relatively constant habits and preferences, a man whose appearance when examined through the observations of his contemporaries is markedly

different from the images used to promote his work. It is this less familiar Byron and not the circulating images, that is the subject of this article.

CHILDHOOD, SCHOOL DAYS AND COLLEGE LIFE

George Gordon Byron was born in London in 1788, the son of Captain John Byron (1756-1791) and Mrs Catherine Byron Gordon (1765-1811). His mother was a young Scottish heiress and his father a spendthrift. By the time of Byron's father's death only three years later, his mother's wealth (£25,000 a year) was reduced to £150 a year.[5] Byron and his mother removed to Aberdeen, where Byron lived until 1798, the year he inherited his title, following the death of his great-uncle William, the 5th Lord Byron (1722-1798). Along with the title came land and property. Byron inherited estates in Norfolk and Lancashire as well as the more famous Newstead estate outside Nottingham. Although both he and his mother never lived there permanently, Newstead Abbey, or at least a version of it, featured large in Byron's imagination and would later surface in his poetry.

Byron was educated first at Harrow (1801-1805) and then at Cambridge (1805-1807). His youth was marked by self-consciousness about his lameness caused by an underdeveloped right foot and calf; his eyes were different sizes and as a consequence he was nicknamed 'eighteen pence' (one shilling, one sixpence); his lifelong tendency to obesity drew comment. Nevertheless his *amour-propre* remained intact while at Harrow – 'I have as much money, as many Clothes, and in every respect of appearance am equal if not superior to most of my schoolfellows'.[6] Although, despite his title, family finances were precarious, his mother was prepared to spend on expensive items of tailored clothing and good quality linen for shirts and nightshirts.[7]

In 1807, in his last year at Cambridge, he recorded that he had successfully lost weight, so much so that many did not recognise him.[8] A cycle of weight gain and weight loss would be the pattern of his adult life. By strictly controlling his food intake, he could

maintain a slimmer figure; he was not tall (5 feet 8½ inches) so weight gain tended to show quite quickly. His lameness and the difficulty of walking meant that he preferred to ride, or travel by carriage. At times, this inactivity also contributed to his weight gain.

BYRON'S LAMENESS

In the John Murray Collection there are two of Byron's corrective leather boots, both for the right foot, one from his early adolescence and the other from young adulthood (Figure 3).[9] The design of these boots was established during his time at Harrow; before that, he had worn a metal brace.[10] Byron's lameness, as can clearly be seen from the shape of the soles of these boots, was in his right foot – not his left, as many have claimed in the past. His shoe and bootmaker, William Swift of Southwell, Nottinghamshire, left a note which said that Byron's foot was formed normally, but that it was one and a half inches shorter than the left, and there was a malformation in the ankle, which was very weak, causing his foot to turn outwards; to counteract this he wore a very thin boot tightly laced under his stocking. Swift also remarked that the calf of his right leg was much smaller.[11] Lasts for Byron's outer shoes survive at Newstead Abbey, and these are perfectly symmetrical, showing that there was a cosmetic element to Byron's corrective inner boot. It made his feet and calves appear symmetrical as the lining boot also had additional padding to conceal the underdeveloped calf on his right leg.[12] The surviving corrective boots are probably those devised specifically for Byron by the surgical appliance maker Timothy Sheldrake (active 1783-1806). Byron endured much taunting in his adolescence and was prepared to endure considerable discomfort if it helped correct his lameness. Sheldrake told Byron that he could conceal the defect 'but to do so would require much personal exertion on his part […] He did not mind that, and more, to gain a point which, in his unfortunate situation, was of paramount importance'. [13]

There has been much discussion over the years on the root cause of Byron's lameness, but there is no clear answer on this. That probably lies with Byron's severed foot in the family vault at Hucknall Torkard.[14]

Byron's lifelong lameness had many ramifications – mostly psychological and behavioural, but also affecting his dress. He wore wide trousers throughout his adult life and with these regularly wore gaiters to help conceal the difference between his two ankles. When swimming he wore nankeen trousers. [15]

YOUNG ADULTHOOD

We can catch glimpses of Byron as a young man from the reminiscences of those who met him in the years before his fame. It is clear that there is a complex mix of behaviours in evidence, but equally clearly, Byron is notable for the way he dressed.

The writer Isaac D'Israeli (1766-1848) wrote of the young Byron, who was then around nineteen years old, and had published little:

'I once met Lord Byron before he was known, before he travelled. Such a fantastic and effeminate thing I never saw. It was all rings and curls and lace. I was ashamed to speak to him; he looked more like a girl than a boy. I remember his shirt collar was all thrown over from his neck, and I observed him, while he spoke to some one, fence with a light cane in a very affected manner'.[16]

Effeminacy in dress and behaviour was viewed with suspicion by many; it was unmanly, un-English and showed the unwelcome influence of continental Europe.[17] Ironically, D'Israeli's son Benjamin would later develop a dandyish interest in clothes. R H Gronow (1794-1865), a memoirist of this era, related how Byron's friend Scrope Berdmore Davies (1782-1852) when at Cambridge, was admitted to Byron's rooms at all hours. On one occasion he discovered Byron in bed with his hair *en papillote* – in curling papers. Byron confessed that he was 'as vain of my curls as a girl of sixteen'.[18]

In 1809, when Byron was twenty-one, he embarked on a two-year journey with his Cambridge college friend, John Cam Hobhouse (1786-1869), via Mediterranean ports to Greece and Turkey. The Napoleonic wars in Europe limited their travel options. A fellow traveller was the novelist John Galt who saw Byron for the first time in the garrison library at Gibraltar, though did not yet know his identity:

'His dress indicated a Londoner of some fashion, partly by its neatness and simplicity, with just so much of a peculiarity of style as served to show, that although he belonged to the order of metropolitan beaux, he was not altogether a common one.' [19]

It is also on this journey that we learn of Byron's fondness for wearing military dress. At Gibraltar, he had a uniform court dress tailored for him, and wore it when invited to dinner by the Rt Hon William Noel-Hill (1773-1842), the British ambassador, at Cagliari, in Sardinia. Galt recorded 'Byron and his companion (Hobhouse) dressed themselves as aid-de-camps – a circumstance which at the time, appeared less exceptionable in the young peer than in the commoner.'[20] Later in Constantinople (Istanbul): 'He wore a scarlet coat, richly embroidered with gold, in the style of an English aide-de camp's dress uniform, with two heavy epaulettes' as well as a feathered cocked hat.[21] This was likely the same coat for which he had paid 50 guineas at Gibraltar.

While travelling in Albania, Byron wrote to his mother that he had seen the Arnaout warriors in their traditional clothing – 'the most magnificent in the world' – and bought several sets of the gold-embroidered garments as he considered them a bargain.[22] It was one of these outfits that he wore for his sitting with the portraitist Thomas Phillips (Figure 4) and would later gift to a friend, Margaret Mercer Elphinstone (1788-1867) as a masquerade costume.[23]

In 1811, after two years abroad, Byron returned to England. Following the death of his mother shortly after his return, he visited Hopwood Hall, near Rochdale, at the invitation

of the Gregge Hopwood family. A fellow guest, Mary Loveday, observing the twenty-three year old writer, noted in her journal: '[…] he is pale & languid-looking […] His voice is piano, and his manner also […] He always wears long pantaloons of white linen, a long gold chain round his neck, and his shirt and frill are embroidered like a Foreigner's.'[24] This description chimes with the earlier observation of Isaac D'israeli as well as some later ones, recollected from the period of his exile in Italy.

BYRON AND BOXING

At Newstead Abbey there survives a set of muffles or sparring gloves which are believed to have belonged to Byron. After his mother's death (1811), seemingly unable to face the ritual, he chose not to join the funeral procession from Newstead Abbey to the family vault at Hucknall Torkard, but instead called for his page Rushton and his sparring gloves, releasing his nervous energy in physical activity.[25] The gloves were inherited with the house when it was donated to Nottingham City Council in 1931. They are of buff leather and date from the early nineteenth century (see Figure 5).

Byron knew about boxing, being intimately involved with the sport, both as a form of exercise, and as an entertainment. He was a friend of John 'Gentleman' Jackson (1769-1845), a former boxing champion, and frequented his training rooms in Bond Street; he also called on him at times to perform useful transactions.[26] Byron also personally backed some prize fighters and arranged some boxing matches.[27] Like many men, Byron could have had himself weighed regularly at Jackson's rooms. Byron was extremely conscious of his tendency to corpulence and a very strict regimen of fish, vegetables, no breakfast, biscuits soaked in vinegar, was common with him. Associated with Jackson at the same premises was the fencing master Henry Angelo (1756-1835), who had taught Byron since his Harrow days. Byron's engagement and familiarity with the slang of London street-life was deployed most

effectively in his late masterpiece, *Don Juan*, where he was able to deliver mocking and satirical put-downs in a breezy and conversational style. Here is his description of a rainbow:

And blending every colour into one,
Just like a black eye in a recent scuffle,
(For sometimes we must box without the muffle).

(*Don Juan*, Canto 2, stanza 92) [28]

LONDON LIFE AND THE ONSET OF FAME

On his return to England and London, the area around St James and Piccadilly became Byron's stamping ground. When a bachelor, he lived there at a variety of addresses, all within a few streets of one another. Byron's clubs were also in this area – Watier's on the corner of Piccadilly and Bolton Street, The Cocoa Tree in St James' Street, the Union Club in St James' Square and the Alfred in Albemarle Street. His publisher John Murray, following the success of *Childe Harold*, also settled in Albemarle Street. Byron's tailor had premises in Conduit Street, off Bond Street. His jeweller, Love & Kelty, had a shop in Old Bond Street, while his fencing and boxing coaches also had premises there. This was the part of London occupied by men like Byron – unmarried, aristocratic, wealthy (or with the prospect of wealth). It was a kind of playground for the leisured urban male, where he could parade, place orders with his tailor, buy luxury items, wine, dine, gamble, fornicate – all within the compass of a few streets. These streets and buildings were strongly gendered spaces, servicing and showcasing elite masculinity. The late eighteenth century had introduced improvements in lighting, paving and drainage which made the streets in this part of London a social space suited to display and consumption.[29] Dress was an important part of this display and in the marking of identity in such a tight-knit community. Byron's immediate model seems to have been the dandy, but his interpretation accommodated more decorative

effects than a dandy would allow. Byron was also perhaps influenced by the Regency's 'Corinthian' model of masculinity, sporting men of rank and fashion who dressed in an urban outfit derived from the sporting country gentleman. Byron did not have their prowess, but he was physically active and sportive – he could ride, swim, box and fence. And Byron also had a complicated relationship with his talent – 'Who would write, who had anything better to do?' - and worried that it was not manly, a sign of effeminacy, degeneracy and weakness.[30] One of his companions from later life, Edward Trelawny (1792-1881), said 'Of nothing was he more indignant than of being treated as a man of letters, instead of as a Lord and a man of fashion'.[31]

Alongside Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), the Regency dandy George Bryan ('Beau') Brummell (1778-1840) featured high on Byron's list of great men. In fact he would rather have been Brummell than Napoleon, if given the choice.[32] Brummell had made an art of dress and in his youth Byron was a keen disciple. Brummell was in the habit, at his London home in Chesterfield Street (from 1799 to 1816) of allowing a small number of visitors to attend his morning dressing procedures. In fact it was Byron's Cambridge companion Davies, a dandy and friend of Brummell, who introduced him to these performances, the meticulous work of fashionable dressing.[33]

Brummell's style was one of careful personal grooming, clean linen and well-tailored clothes, in sober colours. It was this restraint, this unshowy anti-style which made him stand out. As Andrew Elfenbein has written, 'He took a characteristic of Christian manliness, the absence of display, and turned it into a paradoxical form of display: in his hands, reserve was unmasked as a pose like any other.' [34] Byron too saw masculinity as a performance, and insisted on its theatricality, an idea he explored in his writings.[35] Brummell's style owed something to the uniforms he had worn at Eton and as a commissioned officer with the Tenth Royal Hussars. English men's fashionable dress at this time was derived from country

clothing; riding coats with cut away skirts, close-fitting buff leather breeches. Brummell's distinction lay in the careful tailoring of these basic templates.

Byron's connection with the coterie of London dandies was chiefly through his friendship with Davies. Byron later reflected on this earlier period of his life, saying 'I Liked the Dandies; they were always very civil to me, though in general they disliked literary people […] The Truth is, that, though I gave up the business early, I had a tinge of Dandyism in my minority, and probably retained enough of it, to conciliate the great ones'. [36] He also reminisced, writing to the Earl of Blessington in 1823, after reading the Count D'Orsay's journal of fashionable London (which Byron had not seen for seven years): 'in my time Watier's was the Dandy Club – of which (though no Dandy) I was a member at the time too of its greatest glory'.[37] He then references names and events in detail, demonstrating that he was frequently moving in Dandy circles and there is even a hint of pride in the association.

Bills from Byron's tailors John and Thomas Edwards survive for the years 1812-13, the period of his sudden fame, after the publication of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. It was, in publishing terms, a runaway success. Byron was much in demand as a guest, he had become a public figure; he was also a peer with a seat in the House of Lords. These accounts show Byron spending considerable sums on his appearance.[38] Table 1 gives a digest of the clothing bought from his tailor in this short period and helps give an idea of his dress habits and preferences at this time. (A detailed transcription of these accounts can be found in the Appendix, item 1).

Table 1: Compiled 18.09.2018 from Account Thos. Edwards 1812-13, MS. 43553, John Murray Archive, National Library of Scotland.

Summary Table of Clothing Purchases made by Lord Byron from Thomas Edwards, tailor, over a 20 month period 1812-1813			
Garment	Variant	Subtotal	total
PELISSE	Fur trimmed	3	3
TAILCOAT	Black superfine	5	
	Blue superfine	2	
	Olive superfine	1	8

JACKETS	Tartan	1	
	Blue superfine	1	2
WAISTCOAT	White quilted	48	
	Black	8	
	Embroidered	1	57
TROWSERS. etc	Trowsers	109	
	Pantaloons/Overalls	6	
	Breeches	2	117
GAITERS (pairs)	Cloth	119	
	Leather	8	127
MORNING GOWNS	Chintz, patterned	2	2
REGIMENTAL GREAT COAT	Blue superfine, embroidered	1	1
STAFF UNIFORM TAILCOAT	Scarlet superfine, embroidered	2	2

The largest quantities of clothes purchased are trousers, often bought with matching gaiters, and a notable number of white quilted waistcoats. Byron had a preference for trousers of white jean or nankeen. It is likely that these light coloured clothes were needed in quantity as they would soil readily and require frequent laundering. Both *The Taylor's Complete Guide* (1796) and *The Taylors' Instructor* (1809) recommend nankeen breeches for comfort in summer and for how well they wash.[39] An additional surviving bill from this time shows him purchasing three waterproof cloaks for riding (see Appendix, item 2).[40] Byron was clearly intent on presenting a polished face to the world.

The wearing of trousers as fashionable dress was relatively recent, and Byron adopted them quickly and wore this style for the rest of his adult life. Their generous width, as opposed to pantaloons which clung and revealed the contours of the legs - anathema to Byron - allowed the concealment of the deformity of his right calf, ankle and foot. Trousers had come to signal manliness by association with mariners and imperial conquest. Byron's 'trowsers', none of which survive, would not have been the average sailor's ready-made slops, but were tailored in white nankeen or jean, with a fall front fastening. A garment that had been associated with the common ratings had gradually become adopted on practical grounds by midshipmen and officers. From there, trousers began to find popularity as a

fashion among young men in the civilian population.[41] In popular iconography, at the satirical end of the market, in prints by the Cruikshank brothers (Isaac Robert (1789-1856) and George (1792-1878)), Byron's wide trousers became part of his identity along with his curly hair.[42] A surviving sketch by Caroline Lamb, Byron's one-time lover, also shows him wearing wide-legged trousers.[43] The tailoring bills show that to keep his trousers well-positioned on his waist, Byron had a pair of patent web braces, while his trouser legs were kept taut by the attachment of matching foot straps at their hems (see Appendix). Braces (or gallaces) begin to appear as an underdress item in men's wardrobes in the late eighteenth century, and Byron's trouser braces would have been simple straps which fastened to buttons sewn to the trouser waist.[44] They were hidden by the waistcoat. This concern with the line of his trousers would continue through to his later years, as a drawing of Byron in Genoa in 1823 shows.[45]

From his tailor's bills we see that Byron was also attracted to less sober, more ostentatious clothing: military style great coats, tailcoats and jackets, silk sashes and epaulettes also feature in the account – formal clothes which would more obviously announce his presence and status (see Appendix). A tartan jacket and trousers also feature on the list, as well as two patterned chintz morning gowns. A pair of Turkish slippers and a chintz dressing-gown were the required breakfast toilette for an *élégant*, notes Pückler-Muskau (1785-1871).[46] The attraction to military style coats and jackets would continue later in life, particularly during Byron's preparations for the voyage to Greece to aid the Greek struggle for independence.[47]

Also appearing in his tailor's bills is an exceptional item. Byron made preparation to attend a levée at Carlton House by commissioning a set of formal Court clothes – a superfine olive green dress coat, ornamented with cut steel buttons, an embroidered waistcoat and black silk breeches (see Appendix: entry for July 1st, 1812). This was an occasion where he could

not wear trousers. Byron seems to have been fully attired for the occasion, with powdered hair, and wearing a dress sword, when he learned of the levée's cancellation.[48] He never repeated the attempt to pay court to the Prince Regent.

At the same time as Byron was making use of his London tailor to create an image of an urban sophisticate, he was also indulging his taste for jewellery. Around the period of his first fame, Byron spent considerable sums at his jeweller Love & Kelty, partly on gifts he planned to take on another sojourn abroad, and some items for himself. His accumulated bill for this period was £1079. 15s, and purchases included snuff boxes, rings, seals, and gold toothpicks.[49] This Byron is a development of the youthful one commented on by D'Israeli, the Byron of rings, chains, curls and lace. Byron had perhaps graduated to a more sober appearance, but it was nevertheless ornamented by expensive and showy elements. Ring wearing was common at this time, although Brummell only allowed a watch-chain and a plain ring.[50] Later dandies, such as the young Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) and Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), would, like Byron, wear many rings.

A description of Byron from this period, between 1812 and 1814, is in accord with the purchases made at his tailor and his jeweller:

Lord Byron at that time wore a very narrow cravat of white sarsnet, with the shirt-collar falling over it; a black coat and waist-coat, and very broad white trousers to hide his lame foot—these were of Russia duck in the morning, and jean in the evening. His watch-chain had a number of small gold seals appended to it, and was looped up to a button of his waistcoat. [51]

Note that this image is quite at odds with the circulating printed images of the poet at this time (see Figures 1 and 2).

In the brief period after his marriage (January 1815) to Anne Isabella Milbanke (1792-1860), we learn from Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), radical writer and poet, that:

his appearance at that time was the finest I ever saw it, a great deal finer than it was afterwards, when he was abroad. He was fatter than before his marriage, but only just enough so to complete the manliness of his person; […] His dress, which was black, with white trowsers, and which he wore buttoned close over the body, completed the succinctness and gentlemanliness of his appearance.[52]

At this point Byron seems to have succeeded in his projection as a man of fashion. He had learned from his dandy companions, yet had worldly advantages that distanced him from the dandy aesthetic. In her study of dandyism, Ellen Moers characterises the Regency dandy as one who 'has no coat of arms on his carriage […], no ancestral portraits along his halls […], no decorations on his uniform […] and no title […]. The dandy has neither obligations nor attachments: wife or child would be unthinkable […] The dandy has no occupation and no obvious source of support'.[53] The Regency dandy projected a persona that paid undue attention to dress, that was independent, cool and detached and maintained this distinction through his wit and social performance. Byron, however, had a title, a coat of arms, ancestral portraits; he had several occupations, and by 1815 had attachments – a wife and a daughter. Yet alongside his concern to be fashionable he did have some things in common with the dandy set; his wit and his power of self-invention.

But Byron's period of London literary and social fame did not last, quickly turning to notoriety after the failure of his marriage in 1816. Amid the disturbing level of rumour circulating about his private life – perhaps also fearing prosecution – and certainly fleeing his creditors - he left for the continent once more, taking his leave in a coach made in the style of Napoleon's.[54] Although it seems not to have been his intention to go into permanent exile, he never again saw London in the remainder of his short life. These years in Europe, between 1816 and 1824, and his evolving habits of dress will be the subject of a companion article.

BYRON'S WEDDING WAISTCOAT (JOHN MURRAY COLLECTION): FIGURES 6 and 7.

In the John Murray Collection, London there is an early nineteenth century waistcoat. A note by John Hanson, Byron's lawyer and co-executor after his death, accompanies this garment: 'Waistcoat which belonged to King Geo: 2nd often worn by Lord Byron = and which he was married in'.[55]

This linen whitework waistcoat is a genuine eighteenth-century waistcoat which has been re-tailored into an early nineteenth-century waistcoat, losing the original waistcoat's skirts, and its pocket flaps moved to a higher position. The whitework seems to date from the period 1750-60 so the claim that it once belonged to George II is possible (1683-1760).[56] The waistcoat fronts have facings salvaged from the skirt embroideries, and the skirts are also the probable source of the embroidered panels of the stand collar. The re-working is not entirely symmetrical, and the workmanship is not particularly fine in relation to the original textile. Such waistcoat re-workings were not uncommon. In *What Clothes Reveal*, Linda Baumgarten gives examples of waistcoats where the skirts have been shortened and the pockets moved.[57] The style of the surviving pocket flaps on Byron's waistcoat suggests a date in the eighteenth century, in line with the dating of the whitework, before the fashion changed to shorter skirts, with cutaway front edges. The flaps on Byron's waistcoat are symmetrically styled, with scalloped bottom edge, a style which is replaced towards the 1770s by sharply angled flaps. The bottom edges of the waistcoat also have strips of whitework leading away from the front edges. This whitework almost certainly would have formed a decorative frame around the original pocket flaps' placement and their underlying pocket openings.

The arrangement of the buttonholes is slightly puzzling. There are 8 buttons, all original, yet there are 15 buttonholes. It seems that the original buttonholes have been augmented by fresh buttonholes worked between the originals, but they have not been used.

Perhaps this was to mimic the slightly denser buttonhole spacing of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century waistcoats. The original waistcoat would not have had facings but would have been lined to the edges. Here, because the waistcoat would be open for the top few buttons to show the shirt ruffle, the tailor has faced the upper fronts so that some whitework embroidery would show when turned back. The facing on the left hand side (LHS) (proper) has been used to conceal the buttonholes by forming a shallow flap. The stand collar and its facing have also been cut from the original whitework. The present collar seems to have been considered too wide around the neckline and at some time a pleat has been made at the centre back, and the folds stitched down, thus narrowing the width of collar at the back, allowing it to sit closer to any shirt collar worn inside. A functioning pocket has been made under the LHS (proper) front flap, but there is no pocket opening under the flap on the RHS; both pockets would have been functional in the original eighteenth-century waistcoat. This new functional pocket implies the use of the right hand, as reaching over to the left is an easier movement, and Byron was right handed. The original eighteenth-century waistcoat would have been worked as embroidered panels on frames, with the whitework only stitched where it would show in the final garment. A symmetrical pair of panels would be worked, then cut out for the client and made up into a waistcoat. The embroidery would not be wasted. Whitework waistcoats were fashionable late in the first half of the eighteenth century (1740 – 1750) and seem to have been worn in summer and in warm climates. Examples survive in the V&A Museum and at National Museums Scotland.[58] How Byron came by this waistcoat is not clear. Certainly its decorative nature would appeal to him, as he had a large stock of quilted white waistcoats, or Marseille waistcoats, and he displayed a fondness for embroidered shirts.

Alongside this waistcoat in the John Murray Collection, there is an additional, accompanying pair of detached cambric sleeves with whitework around the cuffs. These

employ a different technique to the main waistcoat body, and it seems unlikely but not impossible that these sleeves were part of the George II waistcoat. Sleeved waistcoats continued to be worn to *c.*1760, by which time they were unfashionable. The quilted whitework on the detached sleeves' cuffs is of a similar date to the waistcoat's whitework. There is no explanation in Hanson's note regarding the sleeves.

BYRON'S SHIRT (JOHN MURRAY COLLECTION): FIGURES 8 and 9.

In 1924 John Murray (V, (1884–1967)), a descendant of Byron's original publisher, received a letter from Arthur Barber of Torquay, offering to donate a linen shirt which had once belonged to Byron. It had been given to his late father-in-law, Mr George Lovejoy (1808-1883), by Lady Byron.[59] Mr Barber had considered donating it to the British Museum, but felt that too impersonal an institution. Murray accepted the gift with pleasure, especially as the publisher's premises at Albemarle Street had become a calling point for scholars and devotees of Byron.[60]

The shirt had been kept in a tin box and shows signs of contact with metal. The linen is also yellowed with age. The shirt is likely to date from around 1815-16; for the shirt to be in Lady Byron's possession, it seems likely that it dates from the short period when she and Byron lived as man and wife. The shirt conforms in cut to shirts of the period, and there are many similarities with one in Glasgow Museums' collection which is specifically dated 1816 by its laundry marks.[61] Both shirts have the same cut, and both have cambric chest panels. The collar on Byron's shirt has a scoop cut out of its top edge, allowing it to sit better at the back of the neck when folded down. The Glasgow Museums' shirt collar has been made with a split at its centre, again perhaps to allow it to sit more neatly at the back of the neck.

The shirt is cut with front and back cut in one continuous length. The back length is slightly longer than the front. The full width of the cloth is not used, unlike many other shirts of this period; the width of the shirt body is 78cm. At the chest, a rectangle of linen has been

removed and replaced by two panels of cambric, both gathered to fit at their top and bottom edges. These sit edge to edge at the centre front, joined only for the bottom 5.3cm. To both of these cambric panels is attached a cambric frill or ruffle. Along the shoulder line, narrow strips of linen are used as reinforcement. Similarly, wider reinforcing strips of linen have been sewn along the edges which form the armholes. The sleeves are simple rectangles of linen, gathered at the shoulder and at the cuff. Both sleeves have an underarm gusset formed from a rectangle of linen. These gussets could be replaced with fresh fabric, when required.[62] The shirt tails divide some way up from the hem, and are strengthened by small triangular gussets of folded linen squares. The neckline opening is shaped and reinforced at its outer ends with small triangular gussets also formed from folded linen squares. The neckline is gathered to fit the shirt collar which is made of two layers of linen. The collar is rectangular, with a crescent-shaped scoop cut out, probably to allow the collar to sit well at the back of the neck. The cuffs are simple rectangles of double thickness. The shirt has a laundry identification mark on the lower back tail, on the wearer's left hand side: the letters G.B embroidered under a cross-stitched image of a baron's coronet (see Figure 8). The shirt buttons at cuffs and collar are small, 7mm diameter, and thread covered.

A comment on the laundry habits of the dandy can be found in the letters of Prince Ludwig Pückler-Muskau, written while touring England in the mid-1820s:

As a sample of the necessities of a London dandy, I send you the following statement by my 'fashionable' washerwoman, who is employed by some of the most distinguished 'élégantes', and is the only person who can make cravats of the right stiffness, or fold the breasts of shirts with pleats the right size. An 'élégant', then, requires per week, - Twenty shirts; twenty-four pocket handkerchiefs; nine or ten pair of 'summer trowsers'; thirty neck-handkerchiefs (unless he wears black ones;) a dozen waistcoats; and stockings ' à discretion'.

[…] But as a dandy cannot get on without dressing three or four times a day, the affair is 'tout simple, […][63]

CONCLUSION

It is clear that from the comments of contemporaries and the evidence of Byron's tailoring bills for the period while he was living in London that his appearance regarding dress was quite different from the published images in circulation at this time. He evidently had a strong interest in clothes and in presenting a polished appearance; the large number of white and cream coloured trousers attests to this. The recent fashion for wearing trousers was adopted wholesale by him as they enabled him to conceal his less developed right foot and his limp. He seems to have been fastidious in his dress – showing the traits of a dandy in this respect. Both his surviving bills and contemporary descriptions suggest both a fondness for jewellery, with Byron wearing many rings and chains, and a liking for military dress, or clothes styled with military trimmings. Many of these traits and preferences would continue to operate in the period of his exile, after 1816.

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